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County Administrator

County Administration Building
651 Pine Street, 11th Floor
Martinez, California 94553-1229
(510) 335-1080
FAX: (510) 335-1098

Phil Batchelor
County Administrator

Contra Costa County



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Management Audit of the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District

June 15, 1998

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Management Audit Team Members

- Scott Tandy, Office of the County Administrator
- Gary Brown, Office of the County Administrator
- Terry McGraw, Office of the County Administrator
- Becky England, Office of the Auditor-Controller
- Kathy Jung, Health Services Department

Introduction

The Contra Costa County Fire Protection District is running out of money. For the 1997-98 fiscal year the District budget included expenditures of approximately \$46.8 Million but anticipated revenues of only about \$43.0 Million, leaving an ongoing shortfall of \$3.8 Million.

Between September 1997 and February 1998 the Finance Committee of the Board of Supervisors considered four reports prepared by the County Administrator and the Fire Chief concerning the financial status of the District. The last of these reports, unanimously approved by the Board of Supervisors on February 3, 1998, included "Phase I" expenditure reductions estimated to save a total of \$2.1 Million in 1997-98 but only \$1.3 Million on a continuing basis. The District still suffers a \$2.5 Million annual operating shortfall. Still to be considered are "Phase II" reductions which, if implemented, would further reduce expenditures but have a significant impact on service levels.

Because of the District's precarious financial condition, any action increasing expenditures (without an accompanying increase in revenue) will add to the operating deficit of \$2.5 Million. Such actions include increases in salaries and in benefits such as Worker's Compensation or health care premiums and retirement cost increases required by the Retirement Board, as well as the addition of new or enlarged service programs.

The report approved by the Board of Supervisors on February 3, 1998 acknowledged that the County Administrator had initiated a management audit of the District and approved the hiring of The Davis Company to conduct a study and report on certain issues related to the District's staffing, compensation and financing. The Davis report and recommendations will be submitted to the county on June 18, 1998. The management audit addresses organizational and procedural matters, some of which originated from the major fire district consolidation of Riverview, West County, Pinole and Oakley Fire Districts into the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District which occurred in 1994. It also addresses some issues related to the way in which the District administers certain functions.

The first meeting was held on the 1st of January 1900. The first business was the election of a committee to prepare a report on the state of the Society. The committee consisted of Mr. A. B. C., Mr. D. E. F., and Mr. G. H. I. The report was presented on the 15th of January.

The committee found that the Society was in a state of financial distress. The income was insufficient to meet the expenses, and the funds were nearly exhausted. The committee recommended that the Society should raise a loan of £1000 to meet its immediate needs. This recommendation was adopted by the General Meeting on the 20th of January.

The loan was raised by the sale of the old building and the purchase of a new one. The new building was completed on the 1st of March 1900. The Society moved into the new building on the 15th of March. The loan was repaid by the 1st of January 1901.

The Society has since then been in a state of financial health. The income is sufficient to meet the expenses, and the funds are increasing. The Society has also been successful in its other work. It has held several meetings, and has published several papers. It has also been successful in its efforts to raise funds for the purchase of a new building.

Findings and Recommendations

I. Administrative and Clerical

The following personnel issues stem from the major fire district consolidation which occurred in 1994. At that time personnel from the various county fire districts were brought together with the understanding that attrition would eventually resolve the problem of duplicate staff positions. However, the following situations still exist and are no longer acceptable.

A. Administrative Support

Findings

The District has three Assistant Chief positions, one of which is vacant due to a recent retirement.

The District has two management support positions, a Chief of Administrative Services (CAS) and an Administrative Services Officer (ASO). The CAS handles budget and related fiscal matters while the ASO handles personnel matters. Both managers report directly to the Fire Chief. Neither manager is currently fully performing the duties prescribed by their respective job descriptions.

The CAS is supposed to have overall responsibility for the operation of the personnel, fiscal and administrative functions of the Fire District. This position should direct employees who are engaged in these functions. Currently this position does not have responsibility for personnel matters because they are handled exclusively by the ASO, who does not report to the CAS but reports directly to the Fire Chief.

The ASO should be responsible for the administration and coordination of a variety of management support functions including the department's budgetary and personnel programs. Currently the ASO is responsible for personnel matters and has nothing to do with budget and fiscal matters, which are handled by the CAS. As a result decision making has been fragmented with little or no connection between personnel decisions and the District's financial ability to support those decisions.

The Journal of Management Education is a peer-reviewed journal that publishes research, theory, and practice in the field of management education. The journal is published quarterly and is the primary source of information for management educators and researchers. The journal's content is organized into several sections, including research, theory, and practice. The journal is published by Sage Publications.

Editorial Board

Editor

Dr. Robert L. Kegan, Editor, Journal of Management Education, 1000 University Avenue, Suite 100, San Francisco, CA 94107-1000, USA. Email: rkegan@sf.edu

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The job descriptions make it clear that a department is to have only one or the other of these positions to be responsible for the department's administrative, fiscal and personnel programs. The position responsible for personnel programs should be under the supervision of the Chief of Administrative Services.

Recommendation #1

Eliminate one Assistant Chief position.

Recommendation #2

Assign the position of Administrative Services Officer to report to the Chief of Administrative Services rather than to the Fire Chief. This will establish an appropriate organizational structure which will result in better coordination and control of budget and personnel issues.

Recommendation #3

Direct the Human Resources Director to determine the appropriate job classifications for these positions.

B. Office Management and Clerical Support

Findings

The District has two Office Managers, one of whom reports to the Assistant Chief for Fire Prevention and oversees clerical activities in several units such as Plan Review, Fire Investigations, Public Education, Weed Abatement, Office Services, and Code Enforcement. This position also supervises the clerical support in the Operations Division for units such as Training and Emergency Medical Services.

The following are the names of the persons who have been appointed to the various positions in the organization of the National Council of the American People, as of the date of the meeting of the Council on the 15th of January, 1934.

Executive Committee

The following are the names of the persons who have been appointed to the various positions in the Executive Committee of the National Council of the American People, as of the date of the meeting of the Council on the 15th of January, 1934.

Advisory Committee

The following are the names of the persons who have been appointed to the various positions in the Advisory Committee of the National Council of the American People, as of the date of the meeting of the Council on the 15th of January, 1934.

Finance Committee

The following are the names of the persons who have been appointed to the various positions in the Finance Committee of the National Council of the American People, as of the date of the meeting of the Council on the 15th of January, 1934.

Public Relations Committee

Editorial Committee

The following are the names of the persons who have been appointed to the various positions in the Editorial Committee of the National Council of the American People, as of the date of the meeting of the Council on the 15th of January, 1934.

The second Office Manager reports to the Chief of Administrative Services and oversees activities in several units such as Personnel/Payroll, Accounting, Budget, Communications and Apparatus Shop.

The position of Office Manager typically coordinates office activities related to fiscal, clerical, personnel and recordkeeping functions in a departmental office or plans, organizes and supervises the work of two or more functional units of clerks. The number of clerical staff and complexity of the work requires only one Office Manager.

Recommendation #4

Reduce the number of Office Managers from two to one and direct the Fire Chief to meet with the Human Resources Director to explore the feasibility of relocating one position to a county department.

Findings

The District has three Executive Secretaries; one provides secretarial support to the Fire Chief and the Assistant Chief - Support Services; one provides support to the Administrative Services Officer; and, one provides support to the Chief of Emergency Medical Services. This multiple use of the Executive Secretary classification is not appropriate.

An Executive Secretary is to serve as the confidential secretary to a county department head. Historically only one Executive Secretary is permitted per department. This position is responsible for the department head's work schedule, secretarial support and performance of other duties as assigned by the department head.

One of the Executive Secretaries has recently retired.

Recommendation #5

Eliminate the recently vacated Executive Secretary position.

D2



Contra Costa County

TO: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
FROM: FINANCE COMMITTEE
SUPERVISOR GAYLE B. UILKEMA
SUPERVISOR JOE CANCIAMILLA

DATE: August 4, 1998

SUBJECT: COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE MANAGEMENT AUDIT AND THE DAVIS COMPANY STUDY OF THE CONTRA COSTA COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Specific Request(s) or Recommendation(s) & Background & Justification

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. ACCEPT the County Administrator's Management Audit report and recommendations regarding the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District and DIRECT staff to implement all recommendations except those that require implementation of the meet and confer process with the United Professional Fire Fighters, Local 1230 and AFSCME, Local 2700.
2. ACCEPT the Davis Company report and DIRECT staff to pursue the implementation of all recommendations except those that require initiation of the meet and confer process with the United Professional Fire Fighters, Local 1230.
3. DIRECT the County Administrator, the Fire Chief and the Health Services Director to work with AMR, the County ambulance contract provider, to prepare and submit a plan to the Board of Supervisors that integrates fire district paramedics and the private ambulance system into a single system, conditioned upon the identification of viable, realistic funding and to report back to the Board on the progress of the plan in September 1998. FREEZE the pilot paramedic program at the current level of four units (four paramedic engine companies) and defer deployment of the remaining four pilot units until a decision is made regarding the future of the program and funding for the program is identified.
4. ACKNOWLEDGE the recommendations of the Fire Chief regarding both subject reports (Attachments A-1 and A-2).
5. ACKNOWLEDGE the recommendations of the Fire Advisory Commission regarding both reports (Attachment B) and refer the Commission's recommendations to the Fire Chief for consideration.

Continued on Attachment: —X— YES Signature: _____

— Recommendation of County Administrator

— Recommendation of Board Committee

— Approve — Other

Signature(s): _____

Action of Board on: Aug 4, 1998 Approved as Recommended ☒ Other: ☐

Vote of Supervisors:
☒ Unanimous (Absent _____)
Ayes: _____ Noes: _____

Contact: Terry McGraw (335-1055)
cc: County Administrator
Contra Costa County Fire Protection District
Contra Costa County Fire Advisory Commission
Contra Costa County Taxpayer Association
County Grand Jury
Local 1230

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS IS A TRUE AND CORRECT COPY OF AN ACTION TAKEN AND ENTERED ON THE MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ON DATE SHOWN.

Attested: August 4, 1998
Phil Batchelor, Clerk of
the Board of Supervisors
and County Administrator

By: Terry McGraw, DEPUTY



Contra A
Costa
County

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FROM: FINANCE COMMITTEE
SUPERVISOR GAYLE B. UILKEMA
SUPERVISOR JOE CANCIAMILLA

DATE: August 4, 1998

SUBJECT: COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE MANAGEMENT AUDIT AND THE DAVIS
COMPANY STUDY OF THE CONTRA COSTA COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

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____ Recommendation of County Administrator

____ Recommendation of Board Committee

____ Approve ____ Other

Signature(s): _____

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☒ Unanimous (Absent _____)
Ayes: _____ Noes: _____

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cc: County Administrator
Contra Costa County Fire Protection District
Contra Costa County Fire Advisory Commission
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Attested: August 4, 1998

Phil Batchelor, Clerk of
the Board of Supervisors
and County Administrator

By: James A. Miller, DEPUTY

**County Administrator's Office Management Audit and
The Davis Company Study of the Contra Costa County
Fire Protection District**

Page 2

August 4, 1998

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION/BACKGROUND:

The Contra Costa County Fire Protection District is running out of money. For the 1997-98 fiscal year the District budget included expenditures of approximately \$46.8 Million but anticipated revenues of only about \$43.0 Million, leaving an ongoing shortfall of \$3.8 Million.

Between September 1997 and February 1998 the Finance Committee of the Board of Supervisors considered four reports prepared by the County Administrator and the Fire Chief concerning the financial status of the District. The last of these reports, unanimously approved by the Board of Supervisors on February 3, 1998, included "Phase I" expenditure reductions estimated to save a total of \$2.1 Million in 1997-98 but only \$1.3 Million on a continuing basis. The District still suffers a \$2.5 Million annual operating shortfall. Still to be considered are "Phase II" reductions which, if implemented, would further reduce expenditures but have a significant impact on service levels.

Because of the District's precarious financial condition, any action increasing expenditures that has not been included in the budget (without an accompanying increase in revenue) will add to the operating deficit of \$2.5 Million. Such actions include increases in salaries and in benefits such as health care premiums or retirement cost increases required by the retirement Board, as well as the addition of new or enlarged service programs.

The report approved by the Board of Supervisors on February 3, 1998 acknowledged that the County Administrator had initiated a management audit of the District and approved the hiring of The Davis Company to conduct a study and report on certain issues related to the District's staffing, compensation and financing. The management audit addresses organizational and procedural matters, some of which originated from the major fire district consolidation of Riverview, West County, Pinole and Oakley Fire Districts into the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, which occurred in 1994. It also addresses some issues related to the way in which the District administers certain functions.

The pilot paramedic program was initially frozen at eight units (engine companies) in the Phase I Budget Reductions approved by the Board on February 3, 1998. The eight units were to include the four units currently deployed and four additional units to be established when the additional paramedics complete training.

The Finance Committee received the Management Audit report on June 15, 1998 and The David Company report on June 22, 1998 and referred both reports to the County Administrator, the Fire Chief and the District Fire Advisory Commission for review and recommendations back to the Finance Committee on July 13, 1998.

On July 13, 1998 the Finance Committee met to consider the reports of the County Administrator, the Fire Chief and the Fire Advisory Commission regarding the County Administrator's Management Audit Report and The Davis Company report.

The recommendations to you today were determined after extensive presentations by the County Administrator's Office and The Davis Company and after providing opportunity for comment from the Fire Advisory Commission, Local 1230, City Managers (Lafayette, Pittsburg) and other interested parties.

Recommendation #6

The Fire Chief should retain an Executive Secretary and the Human Resources Director should conduct a classification study of the third position.

Findings

The 1994 fire district consolidation brought together a large number of clerical positions which were providing support to their respective fire districts. Neither the appropriate number or classification of clerical positions has been addressed. There are nineteen (19) clerical positions supporting District operations. This number appears to be excessive given the needs of the District.

Recommendation #7

Freeze all currently vacant clerical positions.

Recommendation #8

Direct the Fire Chief and the Human Resources Director to evaluate the number and classification of clerical positions needed to adequately support District operations and take necessary steps to eliminate any excess positions.

II. Fire Prevention Bureau

Findings

The Bureau is headed by an Assistant Chief who has a Chief Fire Inspector and five (5) Supervising Fire Inspectors who report to him. Two (2) additional Supervising Fire Inspectors complete the senior management of the Bureau.

By job definition, a major part of the duties of the Chief Fire Inspector is to direct the activities of subordinate fire inspection personnel working within the various units of the Fire Prevention Bureau. The Chief Fire Inspector is not providing direction to subordinate line personnel. Rather, he is working in a staff capacity managing the Bureau's Management Information System and budget and conducting special projects in support of the operations of the Bureau and other organizational units within the District.

The entire Bureau needs to be restructured and appropriate supervisory to staff ratios established. There are seven (7) Supervising Inspectors and fifteen (15) Inspectors. The size and reporting relationships in the organization do not justify the need for this many supervisors. This is particularly noted in the Fire Investigation Unit, where a Supervising Inspector is supervising three other Supervising Inspectors.

Certain functions within the Bureau could be performed by civilian (non-safety) personnel.

Recommendation #9

Direct the Fire Chief and Human Resources Director to review the organization and staffing needs of the Bureau to determine the appropriate number and classification of positions needed to meet workload demands; determine the feasibility of using "non-safety" positions; and to eliminate unnecessary positions.

III. Equipment Maintenance

Findings

The District has both a Fire District Apparatus Manager and a Fire District Apparatus Supervisor assigned to oversee the Maintenance Shop. The described job duties and compensation levels of these two management positions are similar.

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Recommendation #10

Direct the Fire Chief and Human Resources Director to review both the Apparatus Manager and the Apparatus Supervisor positions and take necessary steps to eliminate one position.

Findings

The District maintains a fleet consisting of heavy equipment, including fire engines and trucks as well as a large number of light duty vehicles, including sedans, pickups, vans and four-wheel drive vehicles. This vehicle fleet is maintained by a staff of mechanics located at two maintenance shops: one at the District Training Facility in Concord and one at Fire Station #81 in Antioch.

The County General Services Department has a fleet maintenance facility located on Waterbird Way in Martinez where a staff of service workers and mechanics routinely maintain and repair the County's fleet of light duty and heavy equipment vehicles.

Recommendation #11

Direct the County Administrator, Fire Chief and General Services Director to conduct a feasibility study to have the General Services Department assume responsibility for either maintenance of the District's entire fleet or only the light duty vehicles and equipment.

IV. Employee Performance Evaluations

Findings

District employees are not subject to regular, annual job performance evaluations. The job performance of newly hired employees is reviewed each year to determine if it is at least satisfactory, allowing the employees' salaries to increase to the next higher step in the salary range. However, once employees have attained the top step in the salary range for their job classifications they are no longer subject to annual performance evaluations.

The 1993-94 County Grand Jury recommended that all employees be subject to annual job performance evaluations. Subsequently, the Board of Supervisors adopted an Internal Operations Committee report recommending that every County employee be given a written performance evaluation on an annual basis. The County Administrator directed a memo to all county department heads requesting them to take steps necessary to comply with the Board's recommendation.

Recommendation #12

Direct the Fire Chief to work with the Human Resources Director to develop and implement an employee performance evaluation system which provides for every District employee to receive an annual written evaluation of his/her job performance and meet and confer with employee organizations as necessary.

V. Assigned Vehicles

Findings

Currently, the District has forty-nine vehicles assigned to individuals who drive the vehicles home. These vehicles include 39 sedans, 2 pick-up trucks, 5 Broncos and 3 Blazers.

The only District employees who should drive vehicles home are those who are regularly subject to immediate emergency field response. Initial review of assigned vehicles has revealed a number of inappropriate assignments.

The Chief of Administrative Services and the Administrative Services Officer have assigned vehicles which are driven home. Neither position has emergency field response duties and there is no operational need for these vehicle assignments.

Within the Fire Prevention Bureau only the Assistant Chief and the five positions (four Supervising Fire Inspectors and one Fire Inspector) in the

Fire Investigation Unit are regularly subject to emergency call-out and are the only Bureau personnel who should have assigned vehicles. The Bureau staff in the Engineering Services, Public Education, Permits, and Exterior Hazard Control Units are not regularly subject to emergency call-out. Employees who do not have emergency field response duties should not have assigned vehicles which are driven home.

The unwarranted assignment of vehicles imposes unnecessary costs to the District.

Recommendation #13

Immediately terminate the six vehicle assignments to the Chief of Administrative Services , the Administrative Services Officer, the Chief Inspector and the three Supervising Inspectors who are not part of the Fire Investigation Unit.

Recommendation #14

Direct the Fire Chief to develop a vehicle assignment policy with the objective of reducing the 43 remaining assigned vehicles to the extent appropriate and initiate meet and confer negotiations, as necessary, prior to implementing the policy.

Recommendation #15

Direct the Fire Chief to annually review vehicle assignments and submit a report to the County Administrator.

Recommendation #16

Direct the Fire Chief to review the entire fleet of unassigned light duty vehicles, sedans, pickups, vans and four-wheel drive vehicles, for the purpose of reducing the fleet size and replacing some full size vehicles with smaller, more economical vehicles.



VI. Purchasing Practices

Findings

The District purchases a wide array of equipment from fire helmets, clothing, and fire hose to fire engines and trucks. Emergency response personnel need to have equipment that meets fire fighting industry standards and protective clothing that meets an acceptable level of personal protection and safety. However, the need for some of the purchases that have recently been made is questionable, especially in light of the District's finances.

The District has spent funds to replace existing equipment, not because new equipment was necessary but because it represented a newer model that the manufacturer had to offer. Two examples of such expenditures are the purchase of replacement fire helmets for firefighters and the purchase of newer model lightbars for installation on emergency response vehicles. New fire helmets were purchased at a cost of \$62,000 even though the existing helmets met recognized safety standards. New style lightbars were purchased even though the existing vehicle emergency lights met standards. The cost of these lightbars was about \$39,000. In light of the District's financial condition such purchases were not prudent.

Recommendation #17

Direct the Fire Chief to establish a process for setting equipment expenditure priorities.

Recommendation #18

Limit authority to approve the expenditure of district funds for any purpose to the Fire Chief and the Chief of Administrative Services and require that the Fire Chief exercise personal approval of all major expenditures.

VII. Internal Communications

Findings

Internal communications and coordination has not, historically, been well established or consistent among the Chief, Assistant Chiefs and Battalion Chiefs. Communication and coordination has suffered and decisions have been made without the participation of top senior managers.

There is currently no system in place to assure that information on district operations and policies is consistently communicated to all district employees.

Recommendation #19

Direct the Fire Chief to develop a communications system that will provide reliable information concerning district operations and policies to be regularly disseminated to all district staff.

VIII. Internal Committees

Findings

The District has used internal committees, consisting of employees representing all levels within the organization, to provide input to District management on various policy and operational issues such as Affirmative Action, Safety, Equipment and Apparatus, Training, Operations, and EMS. Some of these committees are permanent and meet on a regular basis while others have met on an ad hoc basis. The effectiveness of the committees is variable. Committee participation by off-duty employees has resulted in overtime expenditures.

Recommendation #20

Direct the Fire Chief to review the existing committee system.

Recommendation #21

Employee participation on District committees should generally be voluntary and overtime should be minimized.

IX. Firefighter Overtime

Findings

The current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the District the Firefighters Union, Local 1230 requires the District to maintain a specified "minimum staffing" level on each work shift. An agreement with the union allows the District to have only six "rover" positions to cover shift absences, requiring that additional absences be covered by paying overtime salaries to firefighter personnel to work extra shifts. As noted in the April 22, 1998 Grand Jury report on this subject, at an overtime rate of one and one-half times the regular salary the cost of an overtime shift for a Firefighter is over \$700 while the cost for a Fire Captain is almost \$900. This practice accounts for an overtime expenditure of approximately \$3,000,000 per year and represents 63% of total overtime expenditures. (Reference County Administrator's September 29, 1997 report to the Board of Supervisors' Finance Committee and the Fire Advisory Commission).

Recommendation #22

Direct the Fire Chief and Human Resources Director to take the necessary steps to eliminate the "minimum staffing" requirement in the existing MOU and meet and confer with Firefighters Union, Local 1230 on this issue as required.

X. Automation Capability

Findings

The District is weak in the area of computer support. There is no computer system which links all fire stations and allows for the rapid communication of data. For example, in the daily staffing of fire stations, verification that all positions are covered each shift is currently done via a manual system. The District has reviewed a computer software program that would allow such scheduling to be done much more efficiently. However, purchase of this program has been delayed due to the freeze on expenditures.

The Apparatus Maintenance Shop uses some computer programs for part of its operations but is in need of an upgraded system, including inventory control, which would increase efficiency and productivity.

Recommendation #23

Direct the Fire Chief, with the assistance of the Department of Information Technology, to review the District's existing computer system, including hardware and software, determine unmet needs and develop a plan for implementing upgrades and new programs as necessary to utilize the latest technology to increase efficiency and productivity throughout the District.

XI. Training Programs

Findings

Within the Operations Division is a Training Unit which has responsibility for developing formal training programs on emergency response procedures, fire fighting techniques, on-scene coordination, rescue operations, etc. However, some training, like swift water rescue, has been initiated by District personnel with no involvement or coordination with the Training Unit. This has led to establishment of new training programs with no identified source of funding and no plans for how to develop and deliver the training in the most efficient and cost effective manner.

Recommendation #24

Fire Chief approval should be required for all training programs.

XII. Paramedic Certification

Findings

Expansion of the District's pilot paramedic program has been suspended. So far the 1997-98 fiscal year cost of this training, including related overtime payments, is estimated to be \$275,000. If the paramedic program is to continue at the currently staffed level future training costs will be reduced substantially. However, if the program is to expand to district-wide coverage, these training and related overtime costs will increase significantly to an estimated \$572,000 by the year 2001-02.

Recommendation #25

If it is the Board of Supervisor's policy to expand the District's paramedic program beyond its current staffing level, require as a minimum qualification that future applicants for firefighter positions have valid California paramedic certification.

XIII. Breathing Support Unit

Findings

The District maintains a Breathing Support Unit, which is a truck equipped with an air compressor and related equipment for replenishing air bottles used on Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus. The unit is housed at Station 7 in Walnut Creek and is staffed with a Fire Engineer. The unit responds to all second or greater fire alarms, participates in training drills and regularly visits fire stations to refill air bottles as required.

While there is clearly a need for this vehicle, the current assignment of a Fire Engineer around the clock, is unnecessary.

Recommendation #26

Direct the Fire Chief to determine the feasibility of staffing the Breathing Support Unit with non-safety personnel.

Contra Costa County



Fire Protection District

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KEITH RICHTER

July 8, 1998

AUG 18 1998

TO: Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors Finance Committee

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

FROM: Keith B. Richter, Fire Chief

Keith B. Richter

SUBJECT: Response to the County Administrator's Management Audit

After reviewing and investigating the Management Audit of the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District, I have prepared the following response to the recommendations made:

Administrative Support

Recommendation #1. The Assistant Chief position was not filled and has been eliminated.

Recommendation #2. The Administrative Services Officer is now reporting to the Chief of Administrative Services.

Recommendation #3. I support a review by the Human Resources Department for the job classifications of Administrative Services Officer and Chief of Administrative Services.

Office Management and Clerical Support

Recommendation #4. While it is clear to me that both the current office managers are very productive members of the staff, there may be options available to scale back to one Office Manager. I am supportive of exploring any options in cooperation with the Human Resources Department.

Recommendation #5. One Executive Secretary position has been eliminated.

Recommendation #6. I support the recommendation to have the Human Resources Department conduct a classification study for the current Executive Secretary not assigned to the Fire Chief.

Recommendation #7. I support the recommendation to freeze all currently vacant clerical positions.

Recommendation #8. I support the recommendation to assess the Fire District's clerical needs and to staff appropriately.

Fire Prevention Bureau

Recommendation #9. I support the recommendation to work with the Human Resources Department on a thorough analysis of the Fire Prevention Bureau and make appropriate adjustments.

Equipment Maintenance

Recommendation #10. I support a review of the two Apparatus Management positions. However, since one of the positions also does maintenance work, it is unlikely that the position can be eliminated outright.

Recommendation #11. I support the recommendation to conduct a feasibility study for outsourcing vehicle maintenance to the General Services Department.

Employee Performance Evaluations

Recommendation #12. I support the implementation of an annual performance evaluation for all District employees.

Assigned Vehicles

Recommendation #13. The recommendation to discontinue take-home vehicle assignments for the six positions has been implemented.

Recommendation #14. I support a vehicle assignment policy which allows only those positions regularly subject to emergency call-out to drive a District vehicle home.

Recommendation #15. I support an annual review of vehicle assignments to be conducted by the Office of the Fire Chief.

Recommendation #16. I support a Fire Chief's review of all light duty vehicles and appropriate reductions in fleet size.

Purchasing Practices

Recommendation #17. Equipment purchases are prioritized during the budget preparation process and adjusted as needed by Program Managers and Administrative Staff. Final purchasing approval rests with the Fire Chief.

Recommendation #18. I support limiting authority for the Fire Chief to approve all major expenditures and have implemented this policy.

Internal Communications

Recommendation #19. I support this recommendation and have taken steps to improve internal communications throughout the organization.

Internal Committees

Recommendation #20. While I am supportive of broad-based participation in providing input to management, I have not found the committee system that has been in use to be cost effective. I support a review and revision to improve on the system.

Recommendation #21. I support voluntary participation to the extent allowable by the Fair Labor Standards Act. Overtime for committee work should be kept to a minimum.

Firefighter Overtime

Recommendation #22. I support a change in the existing MOU that would allow for a larger relief pool to replace absent firefighters. This would help to reduce operating costs by minimizing overtime.

Automation Capability

Recommendation #23. Computer support is extremely weak within the Fire District. A needs assessment is currently being performed and a development plan prepared. Upgrades to this technology will allow for increased efficiency.

Training Programs

Recommendation #24. All training programs will be reviewed and approved through the Office of the Fire Chief.

Recommendation #25. Pending a policy decision by the Board of Supervisors concerning the need for a paramedic program within the Fire District, it is difficult to comment on this recommendation. I am in favor of a combination system of public and private ALS providers. But, the current revenue for the program is being collected by the private provider. I support the development of a new system model for Emergency Medical Services within Contra Costa County. This should encompass the call-taking and dispatch functions, first responders, transportation, and patient outcome tracking. Key stakeholders in the system should all be involved in the design and implementation process.

Breathing Support Unit

Recommendation #26. While it is certainly feasible to staff the Breathing Support Unit with non-safety personnel, there would be a reduction in service due to delayed response to emergency scenes and one less firefighter available on the incident.

Recommendation: Wages represent 85% of the District's operating budget. Strive first to balance the District's budget by implementing the recommendations for operating cost reductions, compensation policy changes, and new revenue proposals that are contained herein. If significant cost reductions and revenue options cannot be achieved, then strong consideration should be given to deferring wage adjustments in the future.

The District is implementing the recommendations for operating cost reductions and exploring possible sources of additional revenue.

Recommendation: Immediately begin the process of negotiating a new labor agreement with the Local 1230 (the current agreement expires on 12/31/98). Direct the District's labor relations staff to develop specific proposals related to compensation and minimum staffing and to share these proposals with Local 1230 in preparation for bargaining.

Management proposals for negotiating a revised MOU with Local 1230 are being assembled. I support an accelerated process to begin negotiations as soon as possible.

Recommendation: Require completion of basic paramedic training as a prerequisite, if the Board of Supervisors decides to continue providing advanced life support emergency medical services with paramedics.

This recommendation is a sound business practice provided that the ALS services are continued to be offered by the Fire District. A long-term EMS system model should be developed and implemented. Sustainable funding should be a key consideration for the model selected.

Recommendation: Increase focused recruitment of minorities and females as needed to achieve the department's diversity goals. Use the proposed new itinerant employee, or trainee firefighter work classification as needed to achieve this objective.

I support the continued focused recruitment of minorities and females. Again, an itinerant firefighter classification would need to be structured to allow for transition into a full-time firefighter position.



Fire Chief
KEITH RICHTER

July 8, 1998

TO: Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors Finance Committee
FROM: Keith B. Richter, Fire Chief *Keith B. Richter*

SUBJECT: Response to The Davis Company's Evaluation of Fire Services
and Financing for Contra Costa County

Recommendation: Revise work assignment practices to strictly limit unscheduled overtime.

I agree with the recommendation to curtail unscheduled overtime to the extent possible. Low staffing levels are currently causing most of the overtime expense. This will be relieved when additional firefighters are trained. Other non-emergency overtime is also being addressed.

Recommendation: Renegotiate key provisions of the Local 1230 bargaining agreement, related to FLSA and holiday pay calculations, and minimum staffing standards.

I am supportive of this recommendation.

Recommendation: Create a new fire fighter trainee and/or an itinerant fire fighter classification. Use this classification and/or reserve fire fighters as needed to meet the District's staffing requirements.

I would see this recommendation as an option only if the position could be used as a stepping stone to filling full-time vacancies. The high cost of training and continuing education for firefighters makes part-time employment difficult to maintain. Affirmative Action and recruitment considerations would need to be explored in cooperation with the Human Resources Department.

Recommendation: The District should explore outsourcing of its vehicle maintenance functions, possibly through contracts with other public agencies. Outsourcing should not just transfer the maintenance responsibility, it should reduce cost.

Preventive maintenance for light-duty vehicles has been outsourced for many years. Other needs, such as body repair and engine work on heavy equipment, has also been outsourced for economy. The District will continue to explore outsourcing vehicle maintenance in areas that costs can be reduced.

Recommendation: Renegotiate minimum staffing requirements with IAFF, Local 1230. Modify the present policy to give management greater flexibility to assign staff where needed most on a daily basis to meet all of the District's fire protection mission.

I support a change in the MOU to eliminate restriction on the number of relief firefighters. By maintaining adequate relief staff on each shift, the need for unscheduled overtime is minimized.

Recommendation: Restructure training and operations support work so that most all of it occurs during normal duty time, not on overtime.

I agree that training and operational support should be done during normal duty hours to the extent possible. Some overtime is made necessary due to training needs in specialty areas that are not available from on duty instructors.

Recommendation: Limit overtime to that which is essential to meet a revised minimum staffing policy.

I support this recommendation.

Recommendation: Deploy trainee fire fighters and reserves as needed to meet the District's staffing requirements.

Trainee firefighters could be a viable option if hiring policies were adjusted to allow intake of trainee firefighters to fill vacant full-time positions.

Recommendation: Under utilized units at two station should be re-deployed to meet expansion needs in other areas, or staffing should be reduced to 5 instead of 6 fire fighters through shared unit staffing.

The second companies at Stations 10 and 84 could be redeployed to staff new stations in growth areas. I do not support the recommendation to reduce staffing to less than three persons per company.

Recommendation: The County should be in the emergency medical care business only if a responsible long term financing strategy can be put in place to pay for the service. An acceptable service plan is one that integrates public and private units (i.e. private ambulances and paramedic fire engines) into a single system with new funding for start-up, training and on-going operations costs. Unless an acceptable plan can be constructed, the District should withdraw from this service area.

I agree with this recommendation from the perspective of a paramedic service. The first sentence references "emergency medical care", which I assume means ALS-level care. I do not think that Mr. Davis meant to suggest that the District should withdraw from any medical care. Rather, the District needs to establish a long term strategy for a paramedic program.

Recommendation: Defer deployment of the remaining four pilot units until a long range, financially sustainable strategy is designed. Consider suspending the first four units that are already in place until a decision is made to "get in", or "out of" the emergency medical service business.

I would support holding the number of ALS companies at the current level of four. This will allow us to maintain the certification and proficiency of the paramedics already trained. Expansion of the program should be contingent on development of a financing plan and approval by the Board of Supervisors.

Recommendation: Direct the County Health Services Department, working with the fire department and local ambulance providers, to prepare and submit a new Emergency Medical Service plan to the Board of Supervisor's within 120 days that integrates fire district paramedics and the private ambulance system into a single emergency system - if viable financing can be demonstrated.

I support this recommendation.

Recommendation: The Department should actively review its financial condition with those it serves, and should engage the cities in funding discussions especially for one-time expenses.

I have reviewed the financial condition of the District and have drawn some findings from information presented in the Davis Report. While the information was collected in Appendix D of the report, it did not make it into the body of the text. I feel it important to note, that despite the legitimate criticism of this District, the men and women of this organization are providing outstanding service at a comparatively low cost. Attachments A and B outline that the Contra Costa County Fire District serves more citizens per firefighter at a lower cost per capita than all but one of the ten departments surveyed. I will present this information to the cities we serve. The investment made in fire and emergency services by the residents of the Fire District has been a good one. We will continue to strive for improvements in our service.

Recommendation: District assets should be closely examined and consolidated to the extent practical. Assets no longer needed should be converted, including any excess land and buildings. Consolidation of resources, especially for administrative and support functions that can be outsourced, should be aggressively pursued.

I support this recommendation.

Recommendation: A supplemental financing program built around the department's five year projection of district growth should be pursued that includes:

- a comprehensive updating of all fees and charges at least once every two years;
- consideration and adoption of a vehicle leasing program;
- stronger coordination with local governments, especially, during the permitting process, to install fees that support system expansion - especially for one-time costs.

I support this recommendation.

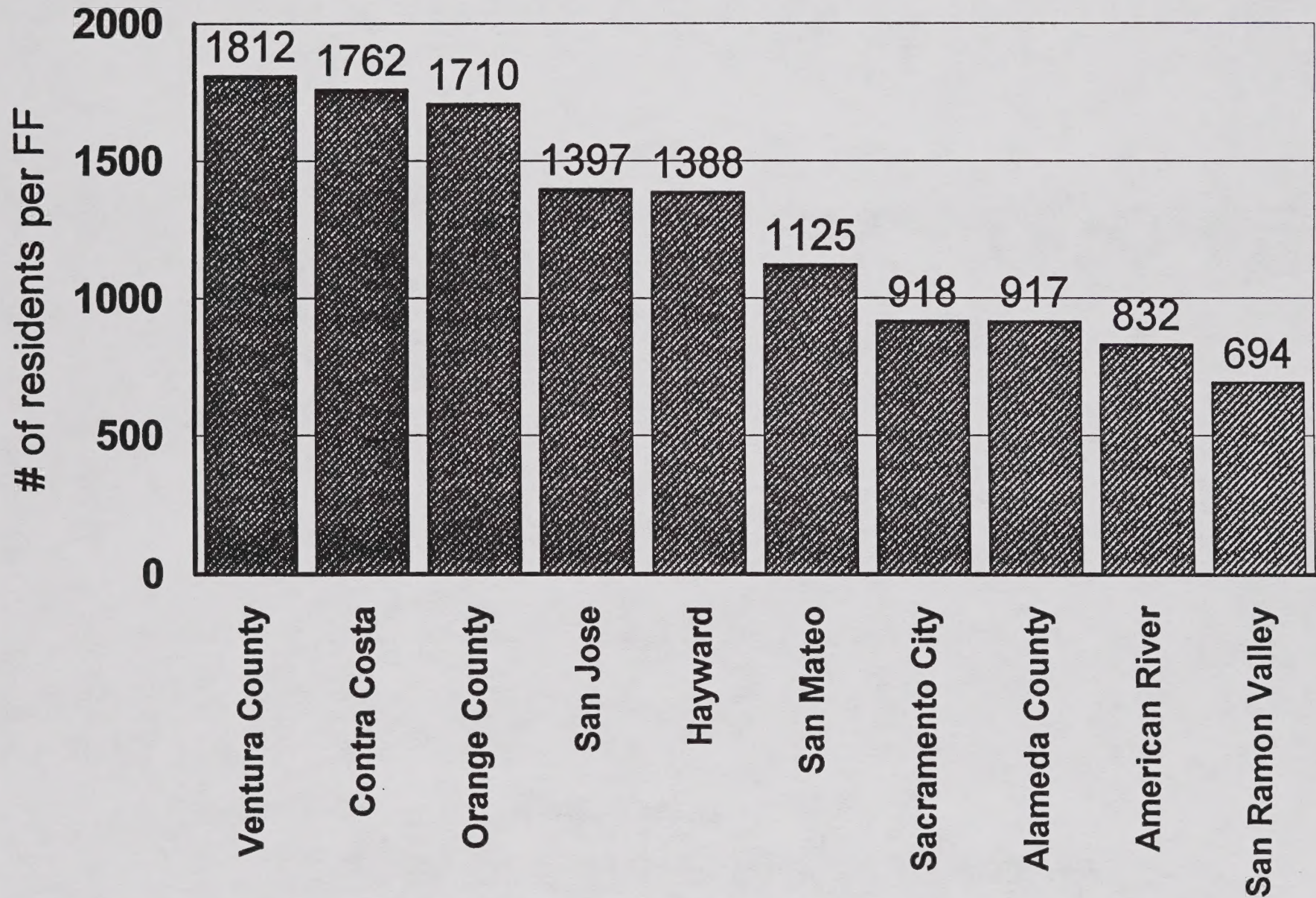
Recommendation: Restructure financing of the emergency medical system in the following ways:

- Collect a first responder fee for medical calls to which fire department units respond, regardless of whether the District remains in the ALS (paramedic) business; and
- Reallocate a share of Measure H funds to the District as part of a system wide redesign if the Board of Supervisors chooses to remain in the paramedic business

EMS fees and financing should be included as part of a larger study to establish a model EMS system for the county.

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Population Served per Uniformed Employee





Cost per Uniformed Employee (per capita served)

